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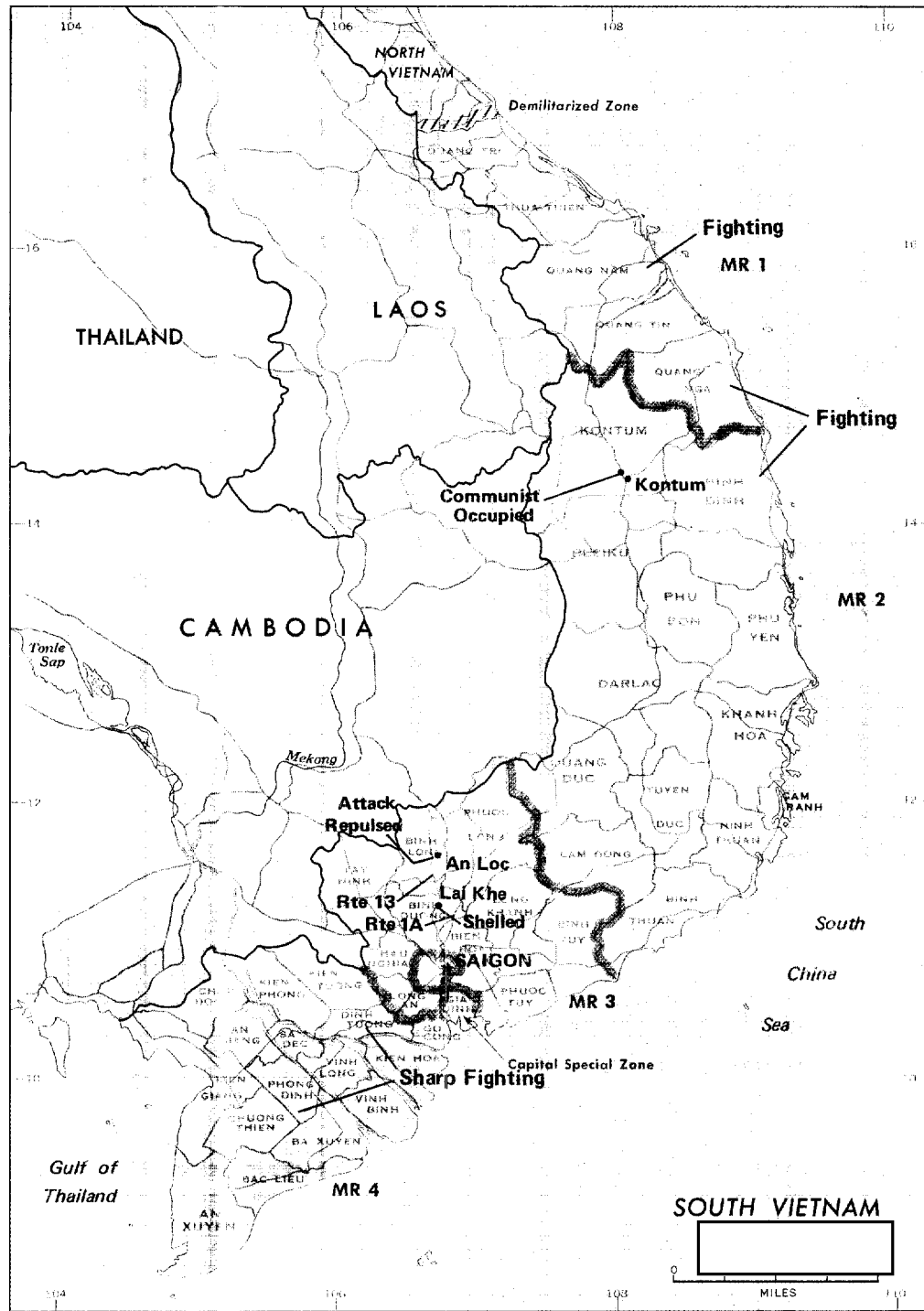
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SOUTH VIETNAM: Military activity increased sharply during the weekend as both sides jockeyed for position in anticipation of new cease-fire arrangements. The heaviest fighting has occurred in the southern two thirds of the country. The Communists have not yet launched a general "land-grabbing" campaign, as in late January, although there are persistent reports that an eleventh-hour effort is planned.

Much of the current activity is in the delta, with fighting reported in almost every province. Sharp fighting persists in Chuong Thien and Dinh Tuong provinces, where both sides are conducting spoiling operations close to long-time Communist base areas. North of Saigon, government defenders at An Loc repulsed a tank-led Communist attack on 9 June with the help of heavy air and artillery support. The Communists also shelled both An Loc and Lai Khe and have so far thwarted government efforts to reopen Routes 13 and 1A.

In Kontum Province, North Vietnamese troops occupied a village about seven miles northwest of the provincial capital following a dispirited defense of the area by government territorials. Along the coast, the North Vietnamese have harassed outlying positions in Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai provinces and pushed back a government ranger unit in Quang Nam. Fighting in many portions of the northern provinces appears to be the result of government operations that, in some instances, are being conducted in territory tacitly left under Viet Cong control for several years. Some of the Communist actions may also be aimed at securing staging areas closer to the populous coastal zone.



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VENEZUELA-CUBA-OAS: Venezuela is mounting a major diplomatic effort to gain majority support in the OAS for relaxation of restrictions against Cuba.

If Venezuela believes such support will be forthcoming it will seek a special meeting of the OAS Permanent Council in Washington this week in an effort to give President Caldera legal sanction to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Castro government.

The OAS is unlikely to muster a two-thirds vote in favor of lifting sanctions. At this point, however, Venezuela is apparently only a couple of votes away from a simple majority favoring a resolution that would leave each country free to make its own decision on the application of sanctions.

The Venezuelan initiative results from domestic political pressures and is a step by the COPEI government to strengthen the party's position in the December presidential elections. Regardless of the outcome in the OAS, therefore, Venezuela will probably normalize diplomatic and commercial relations soon. Coming on the heels of a similar move last month by Argentina, this will be interpreted by Havana as further proof that its policy of widening the gap between the US and Latin America is succeeding. This will further weaken any inclination the Cubans may have had to work toward a Cuban-US rapprochement.

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